

William Loring Jr., 1793

Elegant is the word to describe the house that William Loring Jr. built for his bride, Judith Little, in 1793. The land was part of his father's homestead farm, situated in West Duxbury on the northeastern side of the road from Boston to Plymouth not too far from the Pembroke line. The Loring family were an influential family in Pembroke and Duxbury, William Sr. being in the lumber business. His house and that of his son attest to the fact that it was a successful one.

William Jr. and Judith had 4 children which was not too large a family for those days: William Little Loring (1796-1842); Judith, born in 1801 and married to George B. Standish; Emeline, born in 1806 and married to Alfred Rogers; and Bailey Hall Loring (1809-1822).

In 1829 George B. Standish, a mason, bought the property from his father-in-law for \$2100 which then contained 30 acres. Probably William stayed there as long as he lived. After 1871 the house changed hands several times but it had remained in the Loring family for 80 years. In 1912 it was sold to Emil O. W. Swanson, a minister from Washington Depot, Conn. He chose Duxbury because he had many friends in the area and despite his professional background, he turned to farming. He had 6 children, 2 of whom were born in the house. The house is still in the Swanson family. The neighborhood should be commended for the fact that so many families have remained in it for more than one generation, sometimes 3 or 4.

William Jr.'s house is exceptional. It is a raised frame, hip-roofed type but larger than many and reminiscent of the estates on the coast built by the most affluent ship owners. William Jr., oldest son of 8 children, was but 25 years old when he paid his father 110 pounds for the land and presumably financed the undertaking himself. There are the traditional rooms arranged around the central chimney but each room is larger than average. The most outstanding factor is that every detail is architecturally fine and the proportions a demonstration of perfection.

The panels over the dining room mantel, placed in a narrow horizontal pattern are similar to those in his father's house, so obviously it was part of the original design. The fireplace in the southwest parlor has a unique setting, more ornate than others in the house and may have been renovated later but still in the era of the Loring family. The panel over it is one board 33 inches wide; the Loring family were in the lumber business. It is a handsome room. One gets the impression that the southeast parlor was used more commonly. The setting around the Franklin front is considerably more simple. On the east side of the house there is a doorway leading through a hall into the present dining room. The ell which contains the kitchen seems to be older than the house so one suspects it was a small house moved on for the purpose. It has its own fireplace with an oven to smoke hams in the loft.

The front stairway is unusually spacious, with jogs on front bedrooms making it more so. Actually the jog, beside the fireplace, makes each room more interesting. The upstairs windows are smaller than downstairs, always carrying out the perfect proportion of every detail in the house.

The open chamber, which also boasts of a large fireplace, had 4 small bedrooms leading from it in the back. In the 1920's a 92-year old visitor stopped by to say she had been a boarding student in a small girl's school conducted there. This must have been in the era of George B. Standish who had 3 children: George Bailey, born in 1832; Emeline born in 1834, and Henry O., born in 1842. The school is easily pictured when one sees the size of the house and the small rooms from the open chamber. The school may have been of short duration but its existence is logical as the family was interested in educational pursuits. William Jr.'s son is said to have attended Harvard College in 1820 and his uncle, the Rev. Bailey Loring, graduated from Brown in 1807.

The house stands fairly near the road with 2 tremendous linden trees flanking its front door with great dignity and surrounded by fields handed down with the house since 1793 when William Loring Jr. built his homestead.

Priscilla Swanson Harris, born in this house, and her husband, Edward, have restored it and live there now.

-Virginia Seaver